



Poll: Many Dems want more U.S. support for Palestinians

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and
EMILY SWANSON

WASHINGTON (AP) — A new poll on American attitudes toward a core conflict in the Middle East finds about half of Democrats want the U.S. to do more to support the Palestinians, showing that a growing rift among Democratic lawmakers is also reflected in the party's base.

The poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds differences within both the Democratic and the Republican parties on the U.S. approach toward Israel and the Palestinians, with liberal Democrats wanting more support for the Palestinians and conservative Republicans seeking even greater support for the Israelis.

The survey also examined Americans' opinions on the Biden administration's handling of the Israel-Palestinian conflict. The survey was conducted about three weeks into a ceasefire following a devastating 11-day war last month between Israel and the Gaza Strip's Hamas militant rulers. The fighting killed at least 254 Palestinians and 13 people in Israel.

The poll shows Americans overall are divided over U.S. policy toward Israel and the Palestinians. It also shows more Americans disapprove of President Joe Biden's approach to the conflict than approve of it. Among Democrats, 51% say the U.S. is not supportive enough of the Palestinians.

Continued on next page



In this June 19, 2021, file photo, Palestinians demonstrators wave the Palestinian flag during protest in Damascus gate just outside Jerusalem's Old City.

Associated Press

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In this May 10, 2021, file photo, Israelis wave national flags during a Jerusalem Day parade, in Jerusalem.

Associated Press

Continued from Front

The sentiment jumps to 62% among Democrats who describe themselves as liberal. On the other hand, 49% of Republicans say the U.S. is not supportive enough of the Israelis, a number that rises to 61% among those who say they're conservative. Paul Spelce, a 26-year-old Democratic-leaning independent voter and support-

er of Palestinian statehood, is a member of a heavily religious Texas Republican family whose support for Israel is ingrained with their Christian faith. Spelce, of Austin, says he followed news of last month's Gaza war and the U.S. response closely on the radio as he helped deliver mail. "I started paying a lot more attention," said Spelce, who said he disapproved

of Biden's handling of the conflict and thinks the United States is too supportive of Israelis and not supportive enough of the Palestinians.

"I don't think Biden's word was that strong," Spelce said. "And I don't think, you know, this administration ... can actually do anything" regarding the conflict.

Overall, the poll shows that 29% of Americans say the U.S. is too supportive of the Israelis, 30% say it's not supportive enough and 36% say it's about right. In its approach toward the Palestinians, 25% say the U.S. is too supportive, 32% say it's not supportive enough and 37% say it's about right.

Broad but not unvarying support for Israel has been a tenet of U.S. domestic politics, as well as its foreign policy, for decades. Biden refrained from pub-

licly criticizing Israel over civilian deaths and waited until the last days of fighting last month to openly press Israel to wind down its airstrikes on heavily populated Gaza.

The war highlighted differences among Democratic lawmakers and between some Democratic lawmakers and Biden on Israel policy. Dozens of Democrats in Congress called for Israel and Hamas to cease fire immediately, days before Biden openly did. Sen. Bernie Sanders, a progressive Vermont independent, urged the U.S. to be more even-handed in its approach to the conflict.

The poll found 56% of Americans disapprove of the way Biden is handling the conflict, compared with 40% who approve. While 75% of Republicans disapprove of how Biden is handling the conflict, so do 35% of Democrats.

"The new administration's policies, its posture toward Israel, it's totally different" to President Donald Trump's, said Christina Elliott, a 57-year-old Republican in the northeast Texas town of Atlanta. She said she disapproves of Biden's approach to the conflict and thinks the U.S. should be more supportive of Israelis and less of Palestinians.

"The Palestinians need to put just as much effort as Israel is" into peaceful relations, Elliott said, and added of Israel, "My God, they're surrounded by enemies."

Forty-two percent of liberal Democrats say they disapprove of how Biden is handling the conflict, compared with 31% of moderate and conservative ones. That's compared with just 9% of Democrats who disapproved of how Biden is handling his job in general. Overall, Biden's job approval rating stands at 55%.

Since the cease-fire, Israel

has transitioned to a new government that says it wants to repair relations with Democrats and restore bipartisan support in the U.S. for Israel. Benjamin Netanyahu, the former longtime prime minister, had openly challenged both Biden and President Barack Obama on U.S. policy in the Middle East and was seen as allying himself to Trump.

Some of the respondents in the survey, both Democratic and Republican, cited the comparatively limited timespan of the war — in comparison, 50 days of fighting in 2014 killed more than 2,200 Palestinians and 73 people on the Israeli side — in saying they approved of Biden's handling of the conflict. The poll also shows just 19% of Americans think the U.S. should play a major role in finding a solution to the conflict, while 50% say it should play a minor role and 28% say it should play no role. Democrats and Republicans are largely in agreement on the size of the U.S. role in the conflict.

A majority of Americans, 57%, say they think there is a way for Israel and an independent Palestinian state to coexist peacefully, compared with 39% who say there is not a way. About 2 out of 3 Democrats think there is a way. Republicans are closely divided, with 50% saying there is and 45% saying there is not.

Patrick Diehl, another Democratic-leaning independent, cited U.S. offers to help rebuild Gaza buildings leveled by Israeli airstrikes, "so, I guess, they can be destroyed again. This seems to me kind of hapless."

"You know, we need a stronger position taken by the administration — pushing for actual change rather than continuation of this wretched situation," said Diehl, 74, of Tucson, Arizona. □

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AP sources: Officials mulling ousting U.S. prisons director

By **MICHAEL BALSAMO** and **MICHAEL R. SISAK**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senior Biden administration officials have discussed whether to remove the holdover director of the beleaguered federal Bureau of Prisons who has been at the center of the agency's myriad crises.

The discussions about whether to fire Michael Carvajal are in the preliminary stages and a final decision hasn't yet been made, two people familiar with the matter told The Associated Press. They were not authorized to publicly discuss the internal talks and spoke on condition of anonymity.

But there's an indication that the bureau is shaking up its senior ranks following growing criticism of chronic mismanagement, blistering reports from the Justice Department's inspector general and a bleak financial outlook.

Since the death of Jeffrey Epstein at a federal lockup in New York in August 2019, The Associated Press has exposed one crisis after another, including rampant spread of coronavirus inside prisons and a failed response to the pandemic, escapes, deaths and critically low staffing levels that have hampered responses to emergencies.

At least two regional direc-



In this June 2, 2020, file photo, Michael Carvajal, director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, testifies during a Senate Judiciary Committee on Capitol Hill in Washington.

Associated Press

tors, the officials in charge of federal lockups in the South Central and the Southeast regions — including a Texas prison where inmates routinely walked off the grounds to retrieve drugs and other contraband delivered to them in the woods — are also being replaced.

The Bureau of Prisons said the two regional directors — Juan Baltazar, Jr. and J.A. Keller — are retiring and had been planning to do so. But two other people familiar with the matter said that neither had planned to leave for months and were told other officials were be-

ing appointed to their jobs. On Wednesday, the agency said it was appointing wardens William Lothrop and Heriberto Tellez to the regional posts. Tellez is currently in charge of the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn, where a 34-year-old inmate was found dead in his cell early Wednesday.

British socialite Ghislaine Maxwell is also being held at the jail. Last year, her lawyers sought to question Tellez about the constant surveillance she has been subjected to since her arrest on sex trafficking charges, but a judge re-

fused.

The Justice Department, which runs the bureau, did not directly address whether officials were considering removing Carvajal, one of the few remaining holdovers from the Trump administration. Instead it said it was working to put in place recommendations made by both the department's inspector general and the Government Accountability Office and is undertaking other changes.

"Director Carvajal has formed a task force to help address the fundamental challenges facing BOP," the Justice Department

said in a statement to the AP. "That work is an important priority."

Implementing the changes "will be critical to advancing BOP's mission — ensuring that inmates are housed safely and securely, and also providing critical programming and rehabilitation to help those inmates successfully reenter society after they have served their time," the statement said.

Carvajal took over as director in February 2020, just before the pandemic began raging in the bureau's facilities nationwide, leaving tens of thousands of inmates infected with the virus and resulting in 240 deaths. He also oversaw an unprecedented run of federal executions in the waning months of the Trump presidency that were so poorly managed they became virus superspreader events.

Nearly one-third of federal correctional officer jobs in the United States are vacant, forcing prisons to use cooks, teachers, nurses and other workers to guard inmates. The expanded use of that practice, known as augmentation, has been raising questions about whether the agency can carry out its required duties to ensure the safety of prisoners and staff members while also putting in place programs and classes required under the law. □

Theodore Roosevelt statue at New York museum to be relocated

NEW YORK (AP) — A prominent statue of Theodore Roosevelt at the entrance of The American Museum of Natural History will be removed after years of criticism that it symbolizes colonial subjugation and racial discrimination.

The New York City Public Design Commission voted unanimously Monday to relocate the statue, which depicts the former president on horseback with a Native American man and an African man flanking the horse, according to The New York Times.

The newspaper said the statue will go to a yet-to-

be-designated cultural institution dedicated to Roosevelt's life and legacy.

The bronze statue has stood at the museum's Central Park West entrance since 1940.

Objections to the statue grew more forceful in recent years, especially after the murder of George Floyd that sparked a racial reckoning and a wave of protests across the U.S.

In June 2020, museum officials proposed removing the statue. The museum is on city-owned property and Mayor Bill de Blasio supported removal of the

"problematic statue."

Museum officials said they were pleased with the commission's vote in a prepared statement emailed Wednesday and thanked the city.

Sam Biederman of the New York City Parks Department said at the meeting Monday that although the statue "was not erected with malice of intent," its composition "supports a thematic framework of colonization and racism," according to The Times.

Roosevelt, a pioneering conservationist, was a founding member of the institution. □



In this June 22, 2020, file photo, a statue of Theodore Roosevelt on horseback guided by a Native American man, left, and an African man, right, sits in front of the American Museum of Natural History, in New York.

Associated Press

Justices rule for student in 'cursing cheerleader' case

WASHINGTON (AP) — In the case of the cursing cheerleader, the Supreme Court notched a victory for the free speech rights of students Wednesday, siding with a high school student whose vulgar social media post got her kicked off the junior varsity squad.

The court voted 8-1 in favor of Brandi Levy, who was a 14-year-old freshman when she expressed her disappointment over not making the varsity cheerleading team with a string of curse words and a raised middle finger on Snapchat.

Levy, of Mahanoy City, Pennsylvania, was not at school when she made her post, but she was suspended from cheerleading activities for a year anyway. In an opinion by Justice Stephen Breyer, the high court ruled that the suspension violated Levy's First Amendment freedom of speech rights. Justice Clarence Thomas dissented, noting he would have upheld the suspension.

The justices did not foreclose schools from disciplining students for what they say off campus, though they did not spell out when schools could act. An earlier federal appeals court ruling in this case would have barred public schools



In this April 4, 2021, file photo provided by the American Civil Liberties Union, Brandi Levy wears her cheerleading outfit as she looks at her mobile phone outside Mahanoy Area High School in Mahanoy City, Pa.

Associated Press

from punishing off-campus speech.

Despite ruling in Levy's favor, Breyer wrote that "we do not believe the special characteristics that give schools additional license to regulate student speech always disappear when a school regulates speech that takes place off campus. The school's regulatory interests remain significant in some off-campus circumstances."

The case drew extra inter-

est at a time of remote learning — because of the coronavirus pandemic — and a rising awareness of the harmful effects of on-line bullying.

The decision was a strong endorsement of students' right to speak freely, which the court first expressed more than a half century ago in defending arm-bands worn by high school students in protest of the Vietnam War, said Abner Greene, a constitutional

law professor at the Fordham University School of Law in Manhattan.

"Students can engage in all kinds of critical or dissenting commentary, whether about the Vietnam War or the student cheerleading team, without losing their free speech rights. And it doesn't matter where they say it," Greene said.

The case arose from Levy's posts, one of which pictured her and a friend with raised middle fingers and

included the repeated use of a vulgarity to complain that she had been left off the varsity cheerleading squad.

"F—— school f—— soft-ball f—— cheer f—— everything," she wrote near the end of her freshman year, from a local convenience store, on a Saturday. Now 18, Levy recently finished her first year of college.

Levy's parents filed a federal lawsuit after the cheerleading coach learned of the posts and suspended her from the junior varsity team for a year. Lower courts ruled in Levy's favor, and she was reinstated.

The school district appealed to the Supreme Court after the broad appellate ruling that said off-campus student speech was beyond schools' authority to punish.

The dispute is the latest in a line of a cases that began with *Tinker v. Des Moines*, the Vietnam-era case of a high school in Des Moines, Iowa, that suspended arm-band-wearing students. In a landmark ruling, the Supreme Court sided with the students, declaring they don't "shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate." □

Atheists, humanists sue over Mississippi's license plates



In a May 10, 2018 file photograph, Clay Chandler, director of communications for then Gov. Phil Bryant, holds Mississippi's new standard license plate at the Capitol in Jackson, Miss.

Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — Four words on Mississippi's license plates have sparked a federal lawsuit. American Atheists, the Mississippi Humanist Association and three nonreligious state residents filed a lawsuit Tuesday against the state over its "In God

We Trust" license plate. The complaint accuses the Mississippi Commissioner of Revenue of violating the people's freedom of speech and religion by forcing them to display the religious message on their personal vehicles.

The license plate has in-

cluded "In God We Trust" since 2019. The lawsuit claims that car owners are forced to promote the religious statement or pay an additional fee for a specialty plate without it.

"Every minute they spend on the streets of Mississippi, atheists are forced to act as a billboard for the state's religious message," said Geoffrey T. Blackwell, litigation counsel at American Atheists. "Some can avoid being a mouthpiece for the government by paying a penalty."

The lawsuit also claims that there are no alternatives to the plate for trailers, motorcycles, recreational vehicles, drivers with disabilities and custom plates.

"For years, I had a personalized license plate message on the old blues guitar design," said American Atheists' Mississippi Assistant State Director for Gulfport Sarah Worrel. "In 2019, when 'In God We Trust' became the new standard plate, I was forced to either give up my chosen message or display it alongside the Mississippi government's religious statement. I shouldn't have to make that choice. The government shouldn't be able to decree that I display a message that goes against my beliefs."

Gov. Tate Reeves, in a statement on Twitter, said he plans to defend the license plate's motto.

"I know Mississippi's values are our strength...and I meant it when I said as Governor I would defend our values every single day! I will defend 'In God We Trust' on our tag, on our flag, and on our state seal....Every. Single. Day," he wrote.

"No matter how much Gov. Reeves or other politicians want to pretend that Mississippi is some kind of Christians-only club, it doesn't make it true," said Nick Fish, president of American Atheists. "Forcing atheist drivers to endorse a religious message they reject is antithetical to our values as Americans and unconstitutional, plain and simple." □

5 years after Brexit vote, divided U.K. still feels shockwaves

By JILL LAWLESS

LONDON (AP) — Five years ago Wednesday, Britons voted in a referendum that was meant to bring certainty to the U.K.'s unsettled relationship with its European neighbors.

Fat chance.

Voters' decision on June 23, 2016 was narrow but clear: By 52% to 48%, they chose to leave the European Union. It took over four years to actually make the break and the former partners are still bickering, like many divorced couples, over money and trust.

And five years after a fractious referendum campaign that sparked family arguments and neighborhood disputes, Britain is still as split over Europe as ever. "Britain is still significantly divided over the merits of Brexit," said polling expert John Curtice of the University of Strathclyde. He says voters are split almost exactly 50-50 between "remain" and "leave" supporters, and relatively few have changed their minds since 2016.

"Over four in five people still say that they would vote exactly in the same way as they did five years ago," Curtice said.

The country is also split on whether Brexit has been



In this Thursday, March 31, 2016 file photo, a 'Leave' supporter holds a banner near the Electoral Commission, in London.

a success. In 2016, Brexit campaigners claimed leaving the EU would not only restore British sovereignty, but save the country money. Notoriously, campaigners emblazoned a double-decker bus with the claim that Brexit would give the U.K. an extra 350 million pounds (\$486 million) a week to spend on its beloved national health service. The U.K.'s net contribution to the EU was actually about half that much.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservative government insists that Brexit is bringing new economic opportunities. Britain recently signed its first full post-Brexit trade deal, with Australia, and has applied to join a trade partnership of Pacific-rim countries.

But Britain's trade with the EU, which before Brexit accounted for about half of all imports and exports, plummeted by 20% after the U.K. made a full eco-

nomie break at the end of 2020, although the disruption from the coronavirus pandemic makes it hard to tell how much of that impact is from Brexit.

Jonathan Portes, professor of economics at King's College London, said Brexit will be "a significant but not catastrophic" drag on U.K. economic growth for many years.

"Not a blowout, but a slow puncture," he said.

The referendum ended the

career of then-Prime Minister David Cameron, who had championed staying in the EU and quit soon after. His successor, Theresa May, tried and failed to strike a divorce deal that both the EU and Britain's Parliament would accept and resigned in 2019.

The two most prominent Brexit champions have had mixed fortunes. Former U.K. Independence Party leader Nigel Farage arguably did more than anyone to make Brexit happen, but never won a seat in Parliament despite repeated attempts. He founded, and then left, the Brexit Party, and remained in the public eye as Britain's most vocal supporter of Donald Trump. He is currently out of front-line politics.

Johnson, who led the official "Vote Leave" campaign, became prime minister in 2019 by promising to "get Brexit done" after years of wrangling.

He succeeded in leading Britain out of the EU and straight into another crisis, the coronavirus pandemic. He leads a nation divided over more than just Brexit. Far from bringing the U.K. together, Brexit has frayed the bonds between the different parts of the United Kingdom. □

Associated Press

Belarus leader: We won't stop migrants from heading to EU

By YURAS KARMANAU

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Belarus' authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko has warned that his country will not try to stem a flow of illegal migrants to the European Union, a move that comes after the EU tightened its sanctions on the country.

The EU and the United States have slapped Belarus with tough sanctions after it diverted a passenger jet last month to arrest a dissident journalist.

Lukashenko on Tuesday night denounced the sanctions as what he called a "hybrid war" waged by the West against Belarus and warned the country's EU neighbors — Latvia, Lithuania and Poland — that

they shouldn't expect Belarusian authorities to stop illegal migrants from crossing the border.

"They are wailing: 'Ah, Belarusians are not protecting them — thousands of illegal immigrants are rushing into Lithuania, Latvia and Poland,'" he said in the city of Brest on the border with Poland. "They demand that we protect them from smuggling and drugs. I just want to ask, are you mad? You have unleashed a hybrid war against us and now you demand that we protect you as we did before."

Earlier this month, officials in Lithuania accused Belarus of opening the doors for migrants to cross their shared 680-kilometer (420-

mile) border.

Belarus has been rocked by months of protests fueled by Lukashenko's re-election to a sixth term in an August 2020 election that was widely seen as rigged. The authorities responded to the demonstrations with a massive crackdown that saw more than 35,000 people arrested and thousands beaten by police.

On May 23, Belarusian flight controllers ordered a Ryanair jet traveling from Greece to Lithuania to land in Minsk, where authorities arrested Raman Pratasevich, a 26-year-old dissident journalist who was on board.

Outraged EU leaders responded by barring the Belarusian flag carrier from



Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko attends a ceremony to mark the 80th anniversary of Germany's attack on the Soviet Union in World War II in the Brest Fortress memorial, 360 km (225 miles) southwest of Minsk, Belarus, Tuesday, June 22, 2021.

Associated Press

EU airspace and airports and directing European carriers to avoid Belarus' airspace. They also warned

of more sanctions to come targeting the main export sectors of the Belarusian economy. □

Indigenous protest Brazil bill that could weaken land claims

By **DAVID BILLER and TATIANA POLLASTRI**

Associated Press

BRASILIA, Brazil (AP) — Hundreds of Indigenous people gathered outside Brazil's Congress on Wednesday to push for rejection of a bill that could loosen protections for their lands — a proposal that has already prompted clashes with police.

Indigenous groups have been staging protests for days in the capital. Dressed in traditional clothes and carrying bows, they marched to Congress, where they sang and danced. A group of women gave roses to police officers standing guard. The prior day, police used tear gas to disperse the protesters, who shot arrows; one pierced an officer's leg. The bill before the lower house's Constitution and Justice Committee would require Indigenous people seeking full protection of their territories to have been occupying the land in 1988, the year Brazil's constitution was signed after the nation's return to democracy. If approved in committee, it will go to the floor for a vote.

Indigenous rights activists



Indigenous march past the Cathedral in Brasilia, Brazil, Wednesday, June 23, 2021.

Associated Press

say the cut-off date ignores the fact many had been forcibly expelled from their ancestral lands, particularly during the military dictatorship, or may not have formal means to prove possession.

There are currently 237 such requests for full protection of territories, most small and located outside the Amazon rainforest in Brazil's north region, according to Juliana Batista, a lawyer at the nonprofit Socioenvironmental Institute.

"It is a big conflict because

they're in areas within contexts of real estate speculation, cities, and very much pressured by economic interests," Batista said by phone. "If they can't prove they were in possession, they could lose their lands."

The bill's backers argue it would provide legal certainty to agricultural producers, a key constituency of Brazil's far-right President Jair Bolsonaro. He has said Indigenous people control far too much territory relative to their population. Their territories cover 14% of

Brazil, most in the Amazon — and he has been outspoken about his desire to promote development.

"Brazil has enormous potential within that 14%, that enormous area of our Indigenous brothers," he said in a broadcast on social media in April, while highlighting the country's multitude of agricultural crops. "We want to integrate the Indian into society," he added.

"The Indian wants to integrate into society, and we won't do anything beyond

what our Indian brothers want to do."

Indigenous demonstrators in Brasilia strove to show they were indeed opposed to any changes that could strip them of their rights.

The bill also would allow the government to appropriate so-called Indigenous reserves demarcated prior to 1988 if the groups' cultural features have changed. That could potentially apply to more than 60 areas totaling roughly 400,000 hectares (about 1,500 square miles), which are home to around 70,000 people, according to the institute.

"The bill attacks lands already approved and demarcated and opens space for illegal mining and deforestation if it's approved," Kretã Kaingang, an Indigenous leader from Brazil's southern region, said in an interview. "It attacks all of our rights."

Indigenous demonstrators on Wednesday circled around a giant speaker to listen to the congressional committee's proceedings. They said clashes on Tuesday began when they tried to move out of the blasting sun and into a shaded area. □

U.S. votes against UN resolution condemning U.S. embargo on Cuba



A valet uses an umbrella to protect himself from a downpour as people queue at the entrance of a state dollar store in Havana, Cuba, Friday, June 11, 2021.

Associated Press

By **EDITH M. LEDERER**

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The United States voted against a U.N. resolution Wednesday that overwhelmingly condemned the Ameri-

can economic embargo of Cuba for the 29th year, maintaining the Trump administration's opposition and refusing to return to the Obama administra-

tion's 2016 abstention.

The vote in the 193-member General Assembly was 184 countries supporting the condemnation, the United States and Israel opposing it, and three countries abstained. Four countries did not vote.

Before the vote, the U.S. Mission's political coordinator, Rodney Hunter, told the assembly that the Biden administration voted "no" because the United States believes sanctions are key to advancing democracy and human rights which "remain at the core of our policy efforts toward Cuba."

"Sanctions are a legitimate way to achieve foreign policy, national security, and other national and international objectives," Hunter said, "and are one set of

tools in our broader effort toward Cuba to advance democracy, promote respect for human rights, and help the Cuban people exercise the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."

"We therefore oppose this resolution," he said.

The General Assembly's last vote in November 2019, during its 74th session, was 187-3 with the U.S., Israel and Brazil voting "no," and Colombia and Ukraine abstaining. The assembly's 75th session began in September 2020, but because of the COVID-19 pandemic the vote on the Cuba resolution was postponed from last fall to Wednesday.

General Assembly resolutions are not legally binding and are unenforceable,

but they reflect world opinion and the vote has given Cuba an annual stage to demonstrate the isolation of the U.S. on the embargo. It was imposed in 1960 following the revolution led by Fidel Castro and the nationalization of properties belonging to U.S. citizens and corporations. Two years later it was strengthened.

Former Cuban President Raul Castro and then-President Barack Obama officially restored relations in July 2016, and that year the U.S. abstained on the resolution calling for an end to the embargo for the first time. But Obama's successor, Donald Trump, sharply criticized Cuba's human rights record and in 2017 the U.S. again voted against the resolution. □



Aruba Celebrates Festive Dera Gai and St. John's Day!

ORANJESTAD –Every year on June 24th Aruba commemorates the festive Dera Gai and St. John's Day. Aruba's harvest festival 'Dera Gai' is now a cultural celebration featuring traditional song and dance. The symbol of the rooster and bright yellow and red costumes are central to events held at various locations including community centers.

Dera Gai which translates to "burying of the rooster" in the local language-is a cultural festival which has been celebrated for about 100 years on Aruba with traditional song and dance. This holiday is rife with both pagan and Christian symbolism reflecting the influences of the Arawak natives and Spanish missionaries on the Island, respectively.

Traditionally, the Dera Gai celebration was centered around an unusual ritual. A hole was dug in the ground, and a live rooster was buried in



the hole up to its neck. Blindfolded revelers would be spun around so that they get disoriented and no longer knows the exact location of the rooster and then would be given three tries to decapitate the rooster with a long pole (piñata-style). (The Catholics considered this ritual to be symbolic of the decapitation of St. John the Baptist while the pagans believed that the spilling of the blood would fertilize the earth for the next growing season.) The one to carry out the deed was rewarded with bottles of alcohol and other prizes.

During these festivities, women are dressed with long yellow dresses and yellow hair holders dancing in a choreographed manner. The musicians are dressed in yellow or red with a colorful band tightened on their hips. The instruments used consist mostly of drums and other noisemaker devices. While the music plays, the dancer has to hit the rooster, but the stick is not to touch the ground, or he loses his turn. This is done to symbolize the three times the rooster sang when Saint Peter lied about not knowing Jesus, according to the bible.

Today, a more humane approach is taken. For example, revelers are blindfolded and tasked with locating a flag staked into the ground while swaying their hips to the rhythms of a band. Every now and then, the coordinator of the game fools the blindfolded participants by moving the flag while the game is in progress. Folk



dance groups also reenact the burying and decapitation of the rooster using a plastic rooster. Decked out in bright yellow-and-red costumes-the yellow said to represent the bloom of the local kibrahacha tree in the month of June-these groups also perform harvest dance rituals.

Many years ago, bonfires were built on the eve of St. John's Day in order to communicate the arrival of the holiday to neighbors. The old clippings from the previous year's harvest would be burnt in preparation for the coming growing season. Fire means purification and it scares away bad luck resulting in a better harvest the following year. Nowadays, the fires are burnt island-wide on St. John's Day itself, serving as an olfactory reminder of this unique local festival. □

Summer In Aruba. Poem by David P. Carroll



Summer by the sea,
it's so beautiful to stop and see,
watching the children smiling so bright,
having fun in the warm summer sunlight.

Feeling the warmth on my face,
and Aruba is just a beautiful sunny place,
the taste of the sweetest fruits and I'm
watching the butterflies flow.

Oh how I love the summer days,
smiling so bright kissing my beautiful wife,
and all of the songs we sung were so beautiful and
bright,
in the warm summer sunlight.

It's truly beautiful to see the little birds singing,
to me, it's summer time and I'll remember this summer's
day,
and all of my memories will never fade away,
Oh how I love summer time in beautiful Aruba every
day.

Joyful honoring at Divi Phoenix



EAGLE BEACH — Recently, Kimberley Richardson of the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure to honor Aruba's loyal and friendly visitors as Distinguished Visitors of Aruba. The Distinguished Visitor certificate is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism, as a token of appreciation and to say 'Masha Danki', to the guests who visit Aruba 10 years and more consecutively.

The honorees were **Mr. Patrick & Mrs. Patricia** Joy from USA.

This couple stated that they love the island

very much, especially for its year-round sunny weather, nice sandy beaches and picturesque sunsets, delicious variety of foods, its cleanliness, and Aruba's warm and friendly people whom have become like family to them.

Richardson together with the representatives of the Divi Phoenix presented the certificate to the honorees, handed over some presents and also thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination and as their home-away-from-home. □

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Travellers' Choice 2020

Alcohol ban during Election

ORANJESTAD — In connection with the elections on Friday 25 June, the government has announced a prohibition ("ley seco") by Ministerial Order of 18 June (No.1, DWJZ/1389/21) from Thursday, June 24th 18.00 until Saturday, June 26th 6 a.m.

During this prohibition, all companies licensed to sell alcoholic beverages are prohibited from being open and selling and distributing or giving alcoholic beverages to the public. An exception applies in the following cases:

- Shops that sell other products in addition to alcoholic beverages (eg supermarkets). They may remain open, provided they do not sell/dispense or dispense alcoholic beverages in their shop.
- Hotels and lodgings may remain open, provided they do not sell/dispense or dispense alcoholic beverages to persons other than their guests.
- Restaurants may remain open, provided that alcoholic beverages cannot be sold/dispensed or dispensed in the restaurant. Exception: restaurants at the airport are allowed to sell/dispense or dispense alcoholic beverages to departing and/or transit passengers.
- Snack bars may remain open, provided that alcoholic drinks cannot be sold/dispensed or dispensed in the snack bar.

According to the Ministerial Order of June 18, 2021, DWJZ No.1390/21, any shop/place/place where no license is required to sell light alcoholic drinks is prohibited to sell/dispense or dispense light alcoholic drinks.

Finally, by Ministerial Order of June 18, 2021, DWJZ No.1390-A/21, the use of sound systems to make election-related announcements or to play music within a radius of 50 meters from a polling station is prohibited on Friday, June 25, 2021 from 6am to 8pm.

The police will strictly monitor these measures. □



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Convenience Food and Health

By: Carlos Viana, Board Certified Clinical Nutritionist (USA)

ORANJESTAD — Most convenience stores are filled with convenience (processed packaged) and/or junk foods. The dictionary defines "junk food" as "food that is unhealthy but is quick and easy to eat" and "food that is not good for your health because it is high in fat, sugar, or artificial substances". Difficult to miss, fast food restaurants with big marketing budgets, selling meals at cheap prices are everywhere. Junk food is placed at check-out counters in all kinds of shops to entice impulse buying to those, hungry, tired or stressed. Occasionally even I, will snack on some convenience or junk food.

The desire and need for women to work along with government "guidelines" in the 80's & 90's came with a message that time-consuming preparation of fresh meals is a thing of the past and convenience food was modern solution. Governments all over the world have been allowing the food manufacturing industry to cheat us, promoting a diet based mostly on carbohydrates. Processed grains need little to no refrigeration, have a long shelf life and do not spoil like fresh, whole, natural foods. They also make huge profits for big companies.

Complex carbohydrates are whole and nutritionally complete like brown rice, sweet potato, beans and others. Simple carbohydrates include highly processed grains and starchy vegetables made into bread, rice, crackers, cereals and snack foods which have no nutritional value. In fact, these lab-altered, insecticide filled, chemically processed foods can have a negative effect on health. Junk food, high processed food diets are linked to digestive issues, higher risk of obesity, depression, heart disease and stroke, type 2 diabetes, cancer, and early death.



It is not just sugar, processed grains, spike your body's insulin. Spiking insulin causes sugar to enter your cells too quickly. So, while eating these, your body's response is to continue to feel hungry. You never feel full or satisfied. You end up craving more "fast" food. This 'trick' is used by the industry, offering a drink refill "free". The artificial sugar in the counter drink, spikes your insulin, so you go back to order more food. Natural, unprocessed food releases its sugar slowly, allowing your expanded stomach to produce cholecystokinin (CCK), the first discovered hormone that makes you feel satisfied.

When shopping for food, stay close to outer walls. This is where the coolers are usually placed for "healthier" fresh produce, meats, fish, and frozen frozen food. The aisles in the middle have cans, snacks, candy

and processed, ready to eat "pre-cooked" packages full of added sugar, grain, salts and artificial ingredients. You know, "quick and easy" convenience food.

Another food propaganda, in the 1960s, the United States sugar industry funded research that downplayed the risks of sugar and highlighted the hazards of fat, an industry group called the Sugar Research Foundation wanted to "refute" concerns about sugar's possible role in heart disease, and instead, put the blame on fat. People stopped eating fat because they were told it made them fat or the foods would raise their cholesterol. The "fat free" diet hurt the health of people because in "low fat" foods, the fat was replaced by sugar. Lies that greatly contribute to the obesity epidemic.

Board certified in Nutrition; I never recommend fat-free diets! Foods high in Natural fats are good for you. I eat eggs, salt-free butter, olive oil and avocados, all sources of good cholesterol. Your brain is 80% fat! What you do not want to do is fry your food! When you fry oil, the high temperatures change the healthy fat into a 'bad' fat.

What is real or the truth? You can stay on a low carbohydrate diet for the rest of your long life, eating protein, vegetables, a little fruit and good fat! You do not need any carbohydrates! Carbohydrates, especially with type O blood, the most common blood type, is the foundation of type 2 diabetes. The essential foods, those that you need to survive and stay healthy are: essential amino acids (from protein like beans, legumes, meat, poultry and

fish), essential fatty acids (omega 9 from animal fat, omega 6 from vegetable fat, and omega 3 from fish fat - *flax is a vegan option for 6 and 3), vitamins and minerals also from fruits and vegetables. There are no "essential carbohydrates". Meats, fish, vegetables, and fruits contain a small amount of carbohydrates. Be sure to eat a very varied diet. Try keeping nuts, seeds and boiled eggs available for "convenient" healthy-fat, snacks.

Get the Point! You may be looking for convenience as we return to our busy lives. We occasionally buy a cooked meal to bring home, choosing the best possible ingredients but also convenience, and yes, once-in-a-while, I have and ice-cream (real sugar, no high-fructose corn-syrup) or a grilled cheese sandwich (though we prefer sprouted grain or homemade bread) But, how often you 'cheat' matters when it comes to the impact of junk food on your health. A healthy body metabolizes everything it needs. If you are eating "healthy" and still having digestive issues, or just need some guidance, come in for some Nutritional counseling. We can help you make eating healthy convenient. □

CARLOS VIANA, Ph. D. is an Oriental Medical Doctor (O.M.D.) having studied in China; a US Board Cert. Clinical Nutritionist (C.C.N.), an Addiction Professional (C.Ad.), Chairperson of the Latin American Committee of the International Academy of Oral Medicine and Toxicology (IAOMT), a Rejuvenating Cell Therapist specializing in Age Management, has a weekly radio program, writes and lectures extensively. For information: VIANA HEALING CENTER, Kibaima 7, St Cruz TEL: 585-1270 Web Site: www.vianaheal.com

Some used vehicles now cost more than original sticker price

By **TOM KRISHER** AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — When it was new, the window sticker price on a typical 2019 Toyota Tacoma SR double cab pickup was just under \$29,000. Two years later, dealers are paying almost \$1,000 more than that to buy the same vehicle, even though it's used.

Then they're selling it to consumers for more than \$33,000.

Welcome to the wacky world of U.S. car and truck sales, where the pandemic and a global shortage of computer chips have pushed prices to record levels.

In the past year, used vehicle prices on average have climbed 30%, according to Black Book, which tracks car and truck data. That's created many crazy situations where high-demand vehicles are selling for more than they did when they were new, said Alex Yurchenko, the company's senior vice president of data science.

"The market is very strange right now," said Yurchenko. "Dealers need the inventory, so they are paying lots of money for their vehicles on the wholesale market."

Yurchenko has found 73



This Nov. 15, 2020 photo shows a long row of unsold used Highlander sports-utility vehicles sits at a Toyota dealership in Englewood, Colo.

models of 1- to 3-year-old vehicles being sold at auctions (where dealers buy their vehicles) for prices above their original sticker, which is called the manufacturer's suggested retail price.

Used vehicle price increases accounted for one-third of the large rise in inflation last month, according to the Labor Department. Prices shot up a record 10% in April and another 7.3%

in May, as inflation spiked 5%, the biggest 12-month increase since 2008. The average used vehicle cost \$26,457 this month, according to Edmunds.com.

Many of the models Yurchenko found were high-priced trucks and SUVs or highly sought-after loaded-out vehicles, including the high-performance Ford F-150 Raptor pickup, the 2019 Jeep Wrangler Unlimited Rubicon SUV and the

boxy Mercedes G-Class AMG63 high performance SUV.

But the two-wheel-drive Tacoma SR is the lowest-priced model of Toyota's top-selling small pickup. To be sure, higher end versions of the Tacoma also were on the list, but even more mainstream vehicles are selling for more than their original prices. For instance, the 2020 Kia Telluride and Hyundai Palisade made

the list even though both are considered good values compared with more expensive SUVs with three rows of seats.

Yurchenko says the crazy prices are moving further into more ordinary vehicles. "Before we get through this, prices for many mainstream vehicles will get closer to their manufacturer's suggested retail price," he said. It all started in April and May of last year, when U.S. automakers were forced to close factories for eight weeks to help stop the novel coronavirus from spreading. That cut production, limiting inventory even as demand remained surprisingly strong.

The factories came back faster than expected, and in the meantime, computer chip makers had switched to manufacturing semiconductors for phones, laptops, gaming systems and other consumer electronics. That created a shortage of automotive chips, which is forcing car companies to temporarily close factories, leaving some dealers with few new vehicles.

The lack of new vehicles and higher prices have sent more people into the used vehicle market, so demand is high there, too. □

Associated Press

Big U.S. banks to employees: Return to the office vaccinated

By **KEN SWEET**
AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Wall Street's big investment banks are sending a message to their employees this summer: Get back into the office and bring your vaccination card.

New York-based Morgan Stanley said this week that all employees will be required to attest to their vaccination status. Those who are not vaccinated will be required to work remotely, which could potentially put their jobs at risk, since the bank's top executives have said they want everyone back in the office by September.

"If you can go into a restaurant in New York City, you can come into the office," said Morgan Stanley

CEO James Gorman at a industry conference earlier this month.

Morgan Stanley is one of several big banks requiring employees to return to the office and also provide documentation of having received a coronavirus vaccine or making a formal declaration confirming vaccination.

Goldman Sachs required most of its employees to return to the office on June 14, with some exceptions extending that deadline to Sept. 30. It requires every employee to state their vaccine status, but does not require proof. JPMorgan is asking employees to submit their vaccination records as well, in the form of an internal portal.

The return-to-office push

has its roots in banking-industry culture. Despite years of observing modernization and digital banking, the industry's top executives still operate under a culture that prizes in-person meetings to carve out deals. This has made banks among the leading industries pushing for employees to return to the office as soon as possible as the pandemic wanes.

"We know from experience that our culture of collaboration, innovation and apprenticeship thrives when our people come together, and we look forward to having more of our colleagues back in the office so that they can experience that once again on a regular basis," Goldman Sachs executives wrote



In this Thursday, March 4, 2021, file photo, electronic signage is shown at Morgan Stanley headquarters, in New York.

Associated Press

in a memo to employees earlier this month.

This isn't the first time banks have tried to return their employees to the office in the pandemic. JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon tried to mandate a return

to offices for traders back in September 2020, long before the availability of a vaccine. The experiment lasted less than a week, resulting in several traders becoming infected with COVID. □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Sweeping
- 5 Site of Sevilla
- 11 Cave sound
- 12 Extreme fan
- 13 Magnetic metal
- 14 Dwell
- 15 Anchor's offering
- 17 Spotted cube
- 18 Lab work
- 22 Fantasy creature
- 24 Skateboarding jump
- 25 Bow wood
- 26 Shelley work
- 27 Super-man's adoptive family
- 30 Chopped down
- 32 Failed car
- 33 Unoriginal
- 34 Travel sci-fi-style
- 38 Evening bash
- 41 On the road
- 42 Come in
- 43 Salon sound
- 44 Pre-show ad
- 45 Ibsen's home

DOWN

- 1 Blood bearer
- 2 Land unit
- 3 Decisive confrontations
- 4 Throat mass
- 5 Poet Pound
- 6 Takes care of
- 7 Soft color
- 8 Oscar winner
- 9 Tacit approval
- 10 Had a snack

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Yesterday's answer

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| 19 Economic declines | 30 Weed whacker |
| 20 Ocean motion | 31 Rio Grande city |
| 21 Parrot snack | 35 Lusty look |
| 22 Young one | 36 Track part |
| 23 Oboe part | 37 Keyboard goof |
| 28 Block-dropping game | 38 Convened |
| | 39 Raw metal |
| | 40 Radio's Glass |

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44						45			

6-24

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

6-24

CRYPTOQUOTE

S `K Z M H D Z C D M F D I U

L W K D Q A Z M W K S W B I P D Q Z C D

M F D I U S B W I Q M W G D M W J K M J

— KILBEMA MKMNA

Yesterday's Cryptquote: WE ARE ALL MORTAL UNTIL THE FIRST KISS AND THE SECOND GLASS OF WINE. — EDUARDO GALEANO

Australia fights U.N. downgrade of Great Barrier Reef health



This aerial photos shows the Great Barrier Reef in Australia on Dec. 2, 2017.

Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP)

— Australia said Tuesday it will fight against plans to downgrade the Great Barrier Reef's World Heritage status due to climate change, while environmentalists have applauded the U.N. World Heritage Committee's proposal.

The committee said in a draft report on Monday that "there is no possible doubt" that the network of colorful corals off Australia's northeast coast was "facing ascertained danger."

The report recommends that the world's most extensive coral reef ecosystem be added to UNESCO's List of World Heritage in Danger, which includes 53 sites, when the World Heritage Committee considers the question in China in July.

The listing could shake Australians' confidence in their government's ability to care for the natural wonder and create a role for UNESCO headquarters in devising so-called "corrective measures," which would likely include tougher action to reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions.

Any downgrade of the reef's World Heritage status could reduce tourism revenue that the natural wonder generates for Australia because fewer tourists would be attracted to a degraded environment and dead coral.

Reef cruise operators said the report was wrong and that tourists continued to be awed by dazzling coral and multicolored fish. But

some tourists said the reef had seemed more colorful during visits decades ago. Environment Minister Sussan Ley said she and Foreign Minister Marise Payne had called UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay to express the government's "strong disappointment" and "bewilderment" at the proposal.

Australia, which is one of 21 countries on the committee, will oppose the listing, Ley said.

"This decision was flawed. Clearly there were politics behind it," Ley told reporters. "Clearly those politics have subverted a proper process and for the World Heritage Committee to not even foreshadow this listing is, I think, appalling."

The network of 2,500 reefs covering 348,000 square kilometers (134,000 square miles) has been World Heritage-listed since 1981.

But its health is under increasing threat from climate change and rising ocean temperatures.

The report found the site had suffered significantly from coral bleaching events caused by unusually warm ocean temperatures

in 2016, 2017 and last year. Australian Marine Conservation Society environmental consultant Imogen Zethoven welcomed the committee's recognition that "Australia hasn't done enough on climate change to protect the future of the reef."

The reef would become the first site to be added to the List of World Heritage in Danger primarily for climate change reasons, Zethoven said.

"It would be a very significant step for the World Heritage Committee to make this decision and one that we really hope that it does make because it will open up a lot of potential change," she said.

Richard Leck, a spokesman for the environmental group WWF, said listing the reef as in-danger would be "a real shock" to many Australians.

In 2014, Australia was warned that an "in danger" listing was being considered rather than being proposed for immediate action.

Australia had time to respond by developing a long-term plan to improve the reef's health called the Reef 2050 Plan.

The committee said this week that plan "requires stronger and clearer commitments, in particular towards urgently counteracting the effects of climate change."

Observers say the swearing in on Tuesday of new Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce, who opposes action on climate change that increases prices, signals Australia is likely to set less ambitious targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. □

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Rembrandt's huge 'Night Watch' gets bigger thanks to AI

AMSTERDAM (AP) — One of Rembrandt van Rijn's biggest paintings just got a bit bigger.

A marriage of art and artificial intelligence has enabled Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum to recreate parts of the iconic "Night Watch" painting that were snipped off 70 years after Rembrandt finished it.

The printed strips now hang flush to the edges of the 1642 painting in the museum's Honor Gallery. Their addition restores to the work the off-center focal point that that rebellious Golden Age master Rembrandt originally intended.

"It can breathe now," museum director Taco Dibbits told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

The crowded painting's two main characters, Captain Frans Banninck Cocq and Lieutenant Willem van Ruytenburch, are central in the chopped down painting. With the new digital additions — particularly a strip on the left of the painting that features two men and makes clear that a boy is looking over a bal-



Museum director Taco Dibbits explains how Rembrandt's biggest painting the Night Watch just got bigger with the help of artificial intelligence in Amsterdam, Netherlands, Wednesday, June 23, 2021. Right above Dibbits, left, one of the added parts is seen, the Dutch national museum and art gallery reveals findings from a long-term project to examine in minute detail Rembrandt van Rijn's masterpiece the Night Watch.

Associated Press

ustrade — the main figures effectively are shifted to the right.

"It really gives the painting a different dynamic," Dibbits said. "And what it taught us is that Rembrandt never does what you expect."

The museum always knew the original, uncut, painting was bigger, in part thanks to a far smaller copy painted at the same time that is attributed to Gerrit Lundens.

Researchers and restorers

who have painstakingly pored over the work for nearly two years using a battery of high tech scanners, X-rays and digital photography combined the vast amount of data they generated with the Lun-

dens copy to recreate and print the missing strips.

"We made an incredibly detailed photo of the Night Watch and through artificial intelligence or what they call a neural network, we taught the computer what color Rembrandt used in the Night Watch, which colors, what his brush strokes looked like," Dibbits said.

The machine learning also enabled the museum to remove distortions in perspective that are present in the Lundens copy because the artist was sitting at one corner while he painted Rembrandt's painting.

The reason the 1642 group portrait of an Amsterdam civil militia was trimmed is simple: It was moved from the militia's club house to the town hall and there it didn't fit on a wall between two doors. A bit of very analog cropping with a pair of scissors ensued and the painting took on the dimensions that have now been known for centuries. The fate of the pieces of canvas that were trimmed off remains a mystery. □

Brian Stokes Mitchell hosts a talk show with Broadway stars



This Sept. 27, 2016 file photo shows Brian Stokes Mitchell at the Los Angeles Philharmonic's Walt Disney Concert Hall Opening Night Concert and Gala in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

By MARK KENNEDY
AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Actor Brian Stokes Mitchell will be hosting a new streaming talk show focusing on fellow artists like him who have made the jump from stage to film, television or music.

The first clutch of guests on "Crossovers: Live!" include Bernadette Peters, Kristin Chenoweth, Marc Shaiman and David Hyde Pierce. The six-episode first season starts July 26 with Vanessa Williams as guest. "I want it to be a show that really lights people up and

makes people go, 'Yes! Look what we can do! Look what we human beings are capable of and I'm going to go out and do that same thing,'" Mitchell tells The Associated Press. "I hope it inspires everybody and they also have a lot of fun watching it. And it gives them lots of joy and delight and they learn things that they didn't know about these people before."

"Crossovers: Live!" will be available on Stellar, a new pay live-event platform created by Goldstar. Subscription tickets for the series are \$49 and go on sale Wednesday.

Mitchell is in many ways the perfect host for such a show, having a career that spans Broadway, television, film and concert appearances. He won a Tony Award for his work on "Kiss Me, Kate" and had a

seven-year stint on "Trapper John, M.D." He's since alternated between shows like "Mr. Robot" and Broadway's "Shuffle Along."

"So much of what I'm talking about is luck because it's so out of your hands," he says. "It's been an interesting journey, exploring why some people hit, why some people don't, why some people are wildly successful in one medium or sometimes both."

He said the discussions with his guests will include everything from how they coped with COVID-19 lockdowns to their creative process. Producers say the show will be "cheeky, thought-provoking and wildly entertaining" with "candid discussions, rare footage and unexpected laughs."

Williams, the first guest, has mastered many entertainment genres, from TV

roles on "Desperate Housewives" and "Ugly Betty," to Grammy-nominated albums and stage roles in "Into the Woods" and "The Trip to Bountiful."

Mitchell first worked with her when the two were on Broadway in "Kiss of the Spider Woman" and says she's the perfect person to start the show.

"She kind of embodies what we're going through, what we've been through and where we're headed. She's had this great career on stage, a great career in television, a great career in recording," he says. "She is an incredibly deep thinker and an activist."

Mitchell is chairman of the board of The Actors Fund, which provides a national safety net for performing arts and entertainment professionals. A portion of ticket sales will benefit The Actors Fund. □

Nassib's video shatters decades-old sports barrier

By **JIM LITKE**
AP Sports Columnist

All it took was an Instagram post.

In a 59-second video Monday, Raiders defensive lineman Carl Nassib became the first active player in the NFL's 101-year history to publicly declare he is gay and in the bargain, burst through a barrier that went unchallenged for decades. The end wasn't accompanied by a bang or a whimper, but rather a cheerful, matter-of-fact announcement that he hoped would make life easier for other players, but especially kids, wrestling with the same decision.

"I just want to take a quick moment to say that I'm gay," he began. "I just think that representation and visibility are so important. I actually hope that like one day videos like this and the whole coming-out process are just not necessary ..."

A day later, his wish was essentially granted.

Five years ago, there would have been a half-dozen TV trucks parked at the curb and a few dozen reporters milling about on the sidewalk in front of Nassib's home for days. Whether it's a sign of real progress or simply a reflection of our ever-shrinking attention spans, sports headlines



In this Nov. 29, 2020, file photo, Las Vegas Raiders defensive end Carl Nassib leaves the field after an NFL football game against the Atlanta Falcons in Atlanta.

Associated Press

have already turned their attention elsewhere. Either way, the next NFL player who comes out probably won't even get a follow-up call.

That shouldn't in any way detract from Nassib's announcement. It took him more than half of his life to gather up the courage — "Sadly, I have agonized over this moment for the last 15 years," he said — but only a matter of moments for his teammates, rivals,

coaches and the league itself to trip an avalanche of congratulations on making the right decision.

"The NFL family is proud of Carl for courageously sharing his truth today," NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said in a statement.

"Proud of you, Carl," the Raiders tweeted, and the Chargers quickly amplified with a retweet that added, "some things are bigger than a rivalry."

The list of players who voiced their support began with Darius Stills and Maxx Crosby, teammates who line up alongside Nassib, and quickly spread to guys like Saquon Barkley and Julian Edelman, players whom Nassib & Co. will be looking to crush the second after the ball is snapped. That shouldn't surprise anyone, either. Last October, the league launched a series of initiatives highlighting Pride Month, including a

public service announcement celebrating former players who had come out, expanding partnerships with GLAAD and The Trevor Project and even debuting a pride-themed NFL shield. We'll never know whether it was a genuine commitment to inclusivity or growing public pressure that motivated the boys' club in the NFL's executive suite. But when the most popular, powerful sports league in North America puts its stamp of approval on anything happening outside the lines of a field, it's a safe bet it has been chewed over for hours, vetted by lawyers and audience-tested to the nth degree. And it didn't hurt, of course, that the league had what amounted to a practice run when Michael Sam, a defensive lineman at Missouri, announced he was gay on the eve of the 2014 draft.

Sam was selected by the Rams in the seventh round, then cut before the team broke training camp and signed to the practice squad with the Cowboys. He never played in a regular-season game there, either, but even that short stint demonstrated that acceptance of an openly gay player had reached the tipping point. □

Djokovic, Barty are Wimbledon top seeds, Federer, Serena 7th

WIMBLEDON, England (AP) — Defending champion Novak Djokovic was named as the top seed at Wimbledon on Wednesday as he seeks a 20th Grand Slam title while Roger Federer and Serena Williams will begin the grass-court tournament next week seeded seventh.

Top-ranked Ashleigh Barty is seeded first on the women's side. The Australian hasn't played since retiring from her second-round match at the French Open due to the flareup of an upper-leg injury.

The draw is Friday and the tournament begins Monday. Eighth-ranked Federer has the seventh seed because third-ranked Rafael

Nadal is sitting out Wimbledon to rest and recover after his loss to Djokovic in the French Open semifinal.

Daniil Medvedev is the second seed, followed by Stefanos Tsitsipas and Dominic Thiem, although the Austrian retired from a match in Mallorca on Tuesday because of wrist pain.

Defending champion Simona Halep is seeded second, ahead of Aryna Sabalenka and Elina Svitolina. Second-ranked Naomi Osaka is not playing.

At Roland Garros, Djokovic earned his 19th Grand Slam title to leave him one short of the record co-held by Federer and Nadal.

Federer, a record eight-time champion at the All

England Club, said earlier this year that he would build up to Wimbledon as he returned from two surgeries on his knee.

But the 39-year-old Swiss great hasn't been in top form, pulling out of the French Open after a grueling third-round match and failing last week to reach the Halle Open quarterfinals for the first time.

Federer was tantalizingly close to a ninth Wimbledon title in the 2019 final, holding two championship points before eventually losing to Djokovic in a fifth-set tiebreaker. It was Djokovic's fifth Wimbledon title.

The 39-year-old Williams' latest bid for a record-tying 24th Grand Slam title end-



Serbia's Novak Djokovic kisses the cup after defeating Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece during their final match of the French Open tennis tournament at the Roland Garros stadium Sunday, June 13, 2021 in Paris.

Associated Press

ed in a fourth-round loss at the French Open. Her most recent major title came in early 2017.

Wimbledon was canceled last year for the first time since 1945 because of the coronavirus pandemic. □

Carli Lloyd makes U.S. soccer team for her 4th Olympics

By **ANNE M. PETERSON**
AP Sports Writer

Carli Lloyd is headed to her fourth Olympics after all. The 38-year-old Lloyd had vowed after the 2019 World Cup that she would push to make the Olympic team for before stepping away from the sport. But then the Tokyo Games were pushed back a year because of the pandemic, and Lloyd needed surgery on her knee.

That meant making the 18-player roster was by no means a slam dunk for Lloyd, who scored three goals in the opening 16 minutes of the 2015 World Cup final in Canada.

But coach Vlatko Andonovski believes Lloyd can still be a valuable contributor and included her on the roster he announced Wednesday. Tobin Heath joins Lloyd in heading to her fourth Olympics.

At the 2008 Beijing Games, Lloyd scored in overtime for a 1-0 victory against Brazil in the final. Four years later, she scored both goals in the gold-medal match against Japan at Wembley Stadium, becoming the only player to score winning goals in consecutive Olympic finals.

Lloyd, who will turn 39 before the Tokyo Games, is the oldest national team Olympian, besting Chris-



U.S. forward Carli Lloyd (10) slides on the turf after scoring in the first minute against Jamaica during the first half of their 2021 WNT Summer Series soccer match, Sunday, June 13, 2021, in Houston.
Associated Press

tie Rampone, who was 37 when she played at the 2012 London Games.

"I don't judge the players by their age," Andonovski said.

"They are either good, perform well and can help us win, or they can't. In terms of Carli, she's done everything that she needs to do to earn herself a spot on the team. Now, the fact that she is 39, I think it's remarkable, it's incredible and just speaks a lot about Carli and her determination and her mentality. And that's something that is always welcome on this team."

Heath did not play in the team's recent Summer Series in Texas because of a knee injury. Julie Ertz is also

recovering from an injury but should be ready when the United States opens the Olympics on July 21 against Sweden.

Becky Sauerbrunn, Kelley O'Hara, Alex Morgan and Megan Rapinoe will be playing in their third Olympics.

Abby Dahlkemper, Tiarna Davidson, Emily Sonnett, Rose Lavelle and goalkeeper Adrianna Franch are first-time Olympians, as are sisters Samantha and Kristie Mewis.

Kristie Mewis, who plays for the Houston Dash, is the only player on the roster who was not on the 2019 World Cup-winning team. She and Samantha will be

the first sisters to play for the senior national team in a world championship.

"For Kristie, she is a product of NWSL. She played extremely well in the league in the last year and a half or so, earned herself an opportunity," Andonovski said during a conference call.

"Then after the opportunity was given to her, she took full advantage of it. Every game that she came in, whether it was 5 minutes, 10 minutes, 15 minutes, she maximized that opportunity and continued growing and developing in the league and performing in the league."

Andonovski also named four alternates that will

travel to Tokyo with the team: Goalkeeper Jane Campbell, defender Casey Krueger, midfielder Catarina Macario and forward Lynn Williams.

The United States is vying to become the first team to win Olympic gold following a World Cup title. The Americans have won four gold medals since women's soccer became an Olympic sport in 1996. But at the last Olympics in Brazil, the United States was knocked out by Sweden on penalties in the quarterfinals.

US ROSTER

Goalkeepers: Adrianna Franch (Portland Thorns), Alyssa Naeher (Chicago Red Stars)

Defenders: Abby Dahlkemper (Manchester City), Tiarna Davidson (Chicago Red Stars), Crystal Dunn (Portland Thorns), Kelley O'Hara (Washington Spirit), Becky Sauerbrunn (Portland Thorns), Emily Sonnett (Washington Spirit)

Midfielders: Julie Ertz (Chicago Red Stars), Lindsey Horan (Portland Thorns), Rose Lavelle (OL Reign), Kristie Mewis (Houston Dash), Samantha Mewis (North Carolina Courage)

Forwards: Tobin Heath (unattached), Carli Lloyd (Gotham), Alex Morgan (Orlando Pride), Christen Press (unattached), Megan Rapinoe (OL Reign). □

Alonso will defend HR Derby title; Guerrero Jr. will sit out



New York Mets' Pete Alonso hits a two-run single during the third inning of the team's baseball game against the Chicago Cubs on Tuesday, June 15, 2021, in New York.

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The New York Mets' Pete Alonso will defend his Home Run Derby

by title at Coors Field on July 12, but there will be no rematch with Vladimir

Guerrero Jr. of the Toronto Blue Jays, who has decided not to take part.

Alonso made his announcement Wednesday on his Instagram page. He joins Japanese two-way sensation Shohei Ohtani of the Los Angeles Angels in the derby, held on the night before the All-Star Game.

Alonso won the derby at Cleveland's Progressive Field in 2019, the last time it was held, by defeating Guerrero Jr. 23-22 in the final round.

Guerrero Jr., who shared the MLB home run lead with Ohtani heading into Wednesday's play, spoke before the Blue Jays' game

in Miami. Guerrero Jr. also leads All-Star voting and plans to play in the game, but said he wants to get some rest during the break. "I feel good physically," Guerrero Jr. said through a translator. "Everything is going well. There is a long way to go still. I just want to keep it that way."

Guerrero Jr. has 23 homers and also leads MLB in slugging and OPS. Alonso has 11 homers and set a rookie record with 53 in 2019.

The derby and All-Star Game were canceled last year because of the coronavirus pandemic, which delayed the start of the Major League Baseball

season until late July.

Only two players have won consecutive home run derbies: Seattle's Ken Griffey Jr. in 1998 at Coors Field and 1999 at Boston's Fenway Park, and Oakland's Yoenis Céspedes in 2013 at New York's Citi Field and 2014 at Minneapolis' Target Field.

Guerrero Jr. said he decided to skip this year's event after consulting with his father, Hall of Famer Vladimir Guerrero. Guerrero Jr. said he'll be at the derby as a spectator. "I'm planning to take my camera with the mike on to record everything, and enjoy the moment and support the rest of the guys," he said. □